

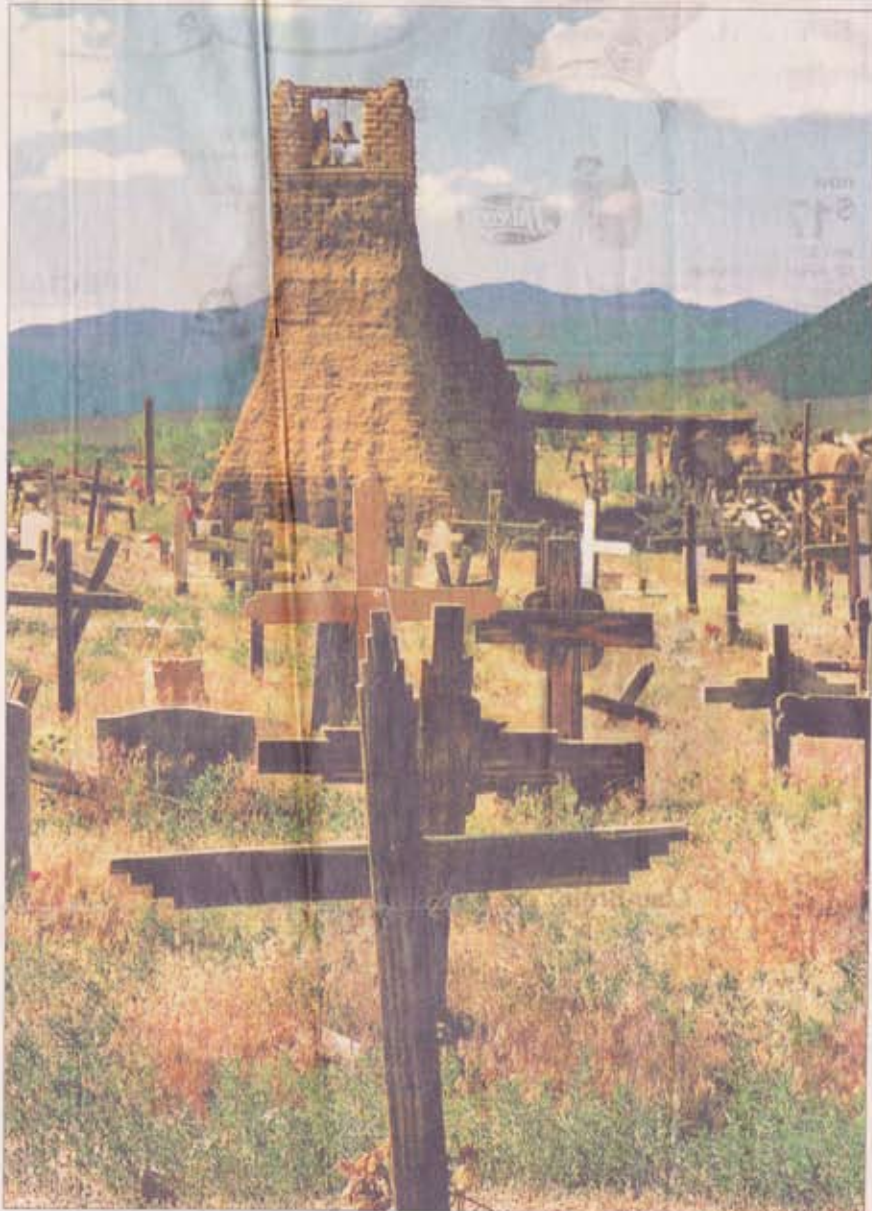
**HELSINKI STUNNING
... BY DESIGN**

Finland's capital proud of its open spaces, lived-in feel and architectural treasures, **T6**



**TASTY TREATS
IN THE TREES**

Moroccan goats clamber up into the branches to devour coveted nuts, **T4**



CECE SCOTT PHOTO

NEW MEXICO

Ghosts of the desert

Otherworldly majesty of cliffs, crags and colours 'gets into your soul'

CECE SCOTT
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

SANTA FE, N.M. — Artist Georgia O'Keeffe once said that God told her if she painted her beloved Cerro Pedernal enough, she could have it. But in spite of her efforts, the iconic mesa in northern New Mexico still inspires visitors to Ghost Ranch, where O'Keeffe lived from the 1940s until her death in 1986, and where her ashes were scattered.

NEW MEXICO continued on T2



PHOTO COURTESY OF GHOST RANCH

The magnificent sandstone mesas and landscape of the New Mexico desert near Ghost Ranch have been inspiration for artists, sculptors and photographers.

HOTEL TRENDS

TRAVEL

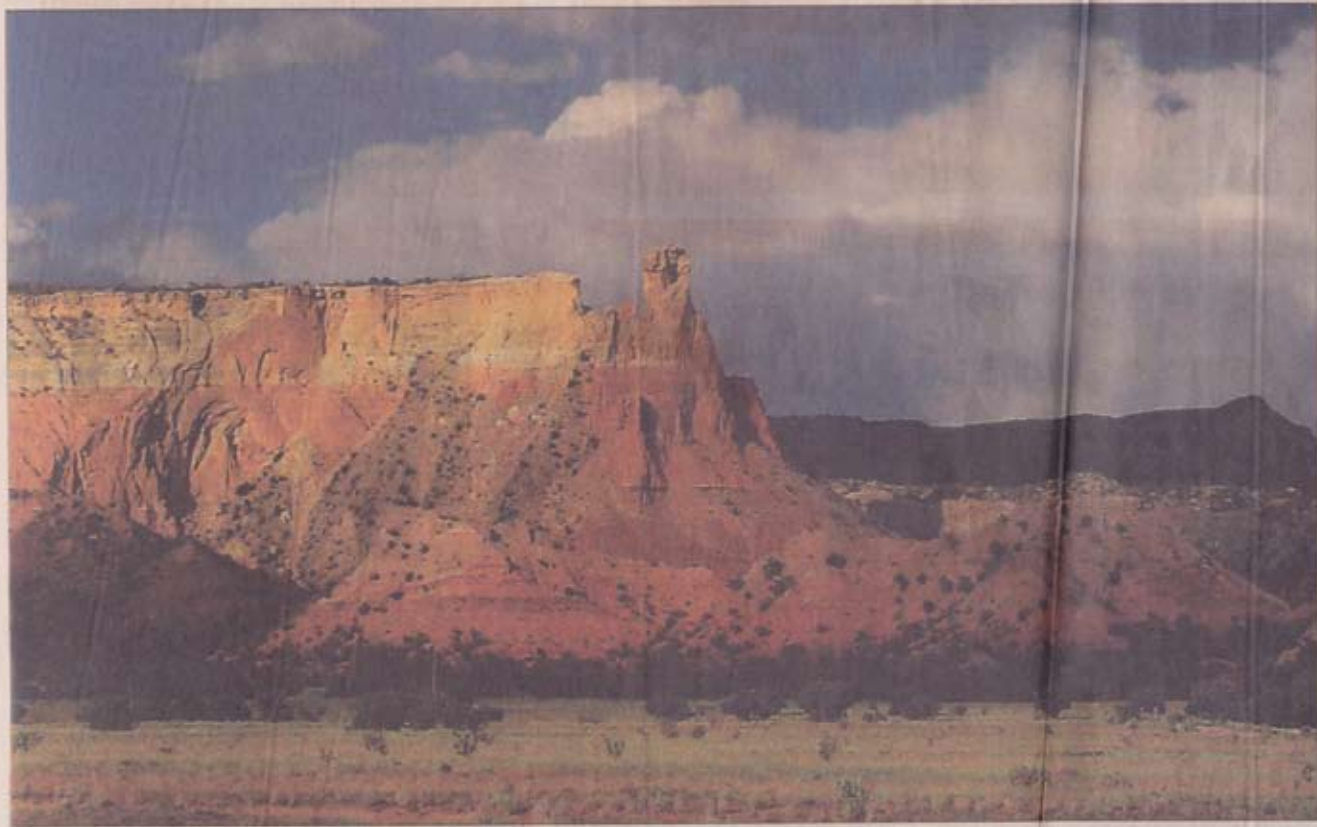


PHOTO COURTESY OF GHOST RANCH

The ancient rock formations of New Mexico, dating back some 220 million years, hold many mysteries and treasures, including a huge deposit of dinosaur skeletons discovered in the 1920s.

Mystical scenery spawned tales of spirits, witchcraft

NEW MEXICO from T1

"I drive back and forth 50 miles every day," says Linda Seebantz, director of the Ghost Ranch Conference Centre.

"It never happens that I don't gasp at something. Spiritual, mystical... it gets into your soul."

Ghost Ranch is an 8,500-hectare spread, about an hour's drive north of Santa Fe.

The road leading to it follows the Chama River through the Piedra Lumbre basin. These ancient cliff walls — the English translation is Shining Stone — change colour with the shifting light of day.

At noon, the sandstone cliffs are salmon pink, layered like a cake with white, then yellow lines. Later, they take on a sombre dark-red hue,

set against the orange-and-blue sunset skyline.

It's an otherworldly feeling, and one that inspired tales of spirits and witchcraft in the folklore of the region's Native American inhabitants.

"The area was steeped in myth," says Fabian Valdez, assistant general manager of the nearby Abiquiú Inn.

Native Americans mined the area for flint (for weapons and tools), and red ochre, which was used to dye clothing.

The ruins of the Indian village of Poushuoiga, which dates back to the 13th century, are nearby. Humans have inhabited the area for 12,000 years. Other residents go back even farther — a huge deposit of dinosaur skeletons was discovered in the 1920s.

That gives the area its feeling of timelessness, says Seebantz.

That mystique and muse has inspired countless artists: potters, painters, sculptors. Photographer Ansel Adams visited, lured by stories of the region's rare beauty. He and O'Keeffe formed a personal and creative bond and collaborated on projects.

In a letter to O'Keeffe's husband, Alfred Stieglitz, Adams wrote: "Wherever you are, you are isolated in a glowing world between the macro and the micro, where everything is sidewise under you, and the clocks stopped long ago."

There is a broad spectrum of activities and artistic workshops to enhance the experience for travellers exploring the ancient sites.

Ghost Ranch recently launched an O'Keeffe Landscape Trail Ride, says Seebantz.

"We use a tour guide and a wrangler. The tour guide introduces (O'Keeffe's) images first and then reintroduces them on the ride," she says. "Riders get to see the view of Georgia's beloved mesa from just outside her front yard."

Another benefit for escapists is that cellphones only work near the entrance to Ghost Ranch.

"It's wonderful to step back from all that buzzing," says Seebantz.

After experiencing the beauty and peace of the area, it seems that the only call anyone would receive in this transcendent place would be one from God himself.

Cece Scott is a Toronto-based freelance writer.

JUST THE FACTS

AIR CANADA and Continental Airlines have non-direct flights from Toronto to Albuquerque. See www.aircanada.com or www.continental.com. The Sandia Shuttle Service to Santa Fe is \$25 (U.S.) per person. See www.sandiashuttle.com or call 1-505-474-5696.

THE O'KEEFFE Landscape Trail Ride runs Tuesdays to Saturdays. The cost is \$65. For information, see www.ghost-ranch.org, or call 1-505-685-4333.

FOR INFORMATION on the Abiquiú Inn, see www.abiquiuinns.com or call 1-800-447-5621.

FARE DEALS

